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ABSTRACT

This checklist outlines steps that students with learning disabilities should consider in preparing themselves for college. In a section titled "The Basics," the checklist calls for consideration of disability awareness; personal and skill development of the student; and assessments, records, and course options in high school. A section titled "College Applications" notes steps involved in getting ready to apply for college, in choosing a college, and in making the transition to college. (JDD)

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HEATH Resource Center
Higher Education and Adult Training for people with Handicaps

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GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE: ADVISING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Students receiving special education and related services need to take a variety of preparatory steps in order to have real choices and viable options in senior year. This is a check list for parents, counselors, teachers, program coordinators, and students themselves to consider well before senior year decision time.

THE BASICS

DISABILITY AWARENESS
(resource teacher, counselor, parent)

Encourage self-advocacy. It is essential that the student be able to discuss the learning disability and be able to request needed accommodations.

Make sure the student understands the particular learning disabilities involved. It is important for the student to be able to discuss strengths and weaknesses as well as which accommodations have been essential to success in high school and will be needed in college.

Help the student understand how the disability is connected to social interactions with peers, families, teachers, and employers. For example, a visual or auditory discrimination deficit or an attention deficit disorder frequently leads to missed cues and inappropriate timing in conversation.

Learn about, and teach the student about, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and how it compares to P.L.94-142. Section 504 indicates types of accommodations that postsecondary institutions must provide or allow **if a student requests them**. The responsibility is on **the student** to seek appropriate services; whereas, under 94-142, the responsibility is on the elementary and secondary schools (working with parents) to provide services.

Some families **encourage the student to have a personal membership in the Learning Disability Association (LDA), Orton Dyslexia Society, support groups for LD students**, or other organizations which will build confidence and information about special programs.

PERSONAL and SKILL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT
(parent, counselor, teacher, and student)

Encourage the student to develop work-related skills and interests in case it is decided to delay entrance to college and work for a year or two. This may involve taking some vocational courses.

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Make sure the student's knowledge of study skills is adequate. In addition to high school assistance, consider special study classes/programs offered at community colleges, private agencies, or individual tutoring.

Help the student to increase independent living skills. The student needs to be able to do laundry, cleaning, and some cooking; manage a checking account and transportation systems; and plan leisure activities.

Encourage part-time jobs or volunteer positions. These offer opportunities to improve social skills and give experience about work situations and job expectations.

ASSESSMENTS, RECORDS, COURSE OPTIONS in HIGH SCHOOL
(parent, counselor, student)

Request the high school to provide a vocational assessment, preferably while the student is in 7th and/or 9th grades.

Plan a four-year selection of college prep courses sufficient to allow the choice to enter college.

Contact the local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency before graduation. VR offers a variety of services to eligible LD students such as vocational assessment, job placement, pre-employment training, etc.

Make sure psychological testing is up-to-date. P.L.94-142 mandates that each student be reevaluated every three years, and more frequently if needed. The college admission and placement processes will require results of tests taken, usually, within three years of the time of application.

Obtain all special testing records before high school graduation. They may be needed for later applications to college or Vocational Rehabilitation services, and some school systems destroy these records after graduation.

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

GETTING READY TO APPLY
(parent, counselor, teacher, student)

Consult with advisors to understand fully how much support or special help the student is receiving. The level of LD services needed in college should be based on a realistic picture of what accommodations have been needed for success in high school.

Challenge the student to evaluate whether he or she has high motivation to put in the long hours needed to accomplish college level work. Is there a career goal? Is college the best transition or training for employment and independence? If so...

Decide whether to arrange for special testing conditions for the PSAT, SAT and/or ACT. Options include extended testing time, readers, cassettes, and sometimes different test locations.

Consider community colleges, technical or proprietary schools, specialized on-campus programs that include a vocational training component, as well as colleges with support services.

Contact the Office for Special Student Services or the Disabled Student Service Office of colleges being considered before applications are submitted. Be sure what types of accommodations and services are available. Do they match those needed by the student in high school? Is there an LD specialist on staff? How many LD students attend? What documentation is required? Are there other pre-admissions requirements such as a letter of recommendation from a high school LD advisor?

APPLICATION DECISION , DECISION and TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

(parents and advisors with student)

The student should make a copy of each application form. The copy should be used as a worksheet to collect the needed information. The material should then be **typed** onto the original form and sent to the college.

Visit colleges, while they are in session, before making a definite choice. Consider the community around the college, cost, student activities, programs offered, as well as LD services provided.

Consider enrolling in a summer orientation session for admitted LD students at the selected college . Or , take one course in a regular summer session. Getting acclimated to the campus and knowing about support service systems builds the student's confidence.

Search for a summer study skills course designed for people with learning disabilities. Collect advice on how to be organized for studying on the college.

Search out any personal contacts or suggestions that will lead the student to find an appropriate advisor, friend, or mentor on campus.

Getting Ready for College; Advising High School Students with Learning Disabilities has been prepared under Cooperative Agreement No. G0087C3052 awarded to the American Council on Education by the U.S. Department of Education. The contents do not neccesarily reflect the views of the U.S.Government, nor does mention of products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

This publication is based on an original list by Carol Sullivan, Counselor for LD Students at Northern Virginia Community (Annandale, VA), and former versions by the Association on Handicapped Student Service Programs in Postsecondary Education (AHSSPPE), and the HEATH Resource Center, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC. Single copies are available free from HEATH. Local calls, (202)939-9324; others, (800)544-3284 voice/TDD.

Fall 1990. Ann R. Davie

About HEATH:

The HEATH Resource Center operates the national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with handicaps. HEATH is an acronym for Higher Education and Adult Training for people with Handicaps. Support from the United States Department of Education enables the Center, a program of the American Council on Education, to serve as an information exchange about educational support services, policies, procedures, adaptations, and opportunities on American campuses, vocational-technical schools, adult education programs, independent living centers, and other training entities after high school. The Center gathers and disseminates this information so that people with disabilities can develop their full potential through postsecondary education and training if they choose.

HEATH publications of interest to those advising learning disabled high school students are available free by request (single copy only). Permission to duplicate HEATH materials is not neccesary and is definitely encouraged.

Send your request for materials to:

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___ Vocational Rehabilitation Services- A Student Consumer's Guide
___ Young Adults with Learning Disabilities and Other Special Needs: Guide for Selecting Postsecondary Transition Programs

___ The HEATH Resource Directory

• The HEATH Resource Directory, is an annotated listing of over 150 national organizations relevant to education after high school, including those mentioned in this paper.

• Copies of the 504 regulations may be obtained from Regional Offices of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, which are listed in the HEATH Resource Directory.